

Sermon October 18th, 2020

God's Hand Print is On Everything

We make a lot of decisions in our life-time. We make decisions around what relationships we want to invest our time and energy into. We make decisions around what career we want to pursue. We make decisions around where we are going to live. We make decisions around what we are going to spend our money on. We make decisions around what policies and values we are going to stand behind. We make decisions around what we are going to wear or what toppings we want on our pizza **(Image)**.

Everyday we are faced with decisions that at times are easy for us to make, and at other times, very difficult for us to make. The question Jesus is posed with this morning puts Jesus in a very difficult position. If Jesus says it is right to pay taxes to Caesar, the Pharisees and many who have been following Jesus will think everything he says and does is for nothing. Because for many of them they dislike the Roman Empire, and want the messiah to bring down the Empire. To support paying taxes to Caesar, was supporting the Empire and their oppressive vision for the world.

If Jesus says they shouldn't pay taxes to Caesar. Then the Herodians who were huge supporters of the Empire and its vision would arrest Jesus for treason. Jesus has a very tough decision to make. It seems like a lose, lose decision. Where either way he will face severe consequences.

I'm sure everyone of us at one point or another has faced a dilemma like Jesus is facing. Where no matter what decision we make we will disappoint someone. Parenting multiple children, I can say with much confidence that I find myself constantly making decisions that disappoint at least one of my children **(Image)**. As long as it's not the same child being disappointed every time.

In response to this dilemma, Jesus says something that leaves this diverse crowd walking away content with what he said. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's". From the perspective of the Herodians, Jesus has just told everyone to pay their taxes. Or this is what it seems. For the Pharisees, they understand the deeper message of what Jesus is saying. According to Judaism, everything belongs to God. Even the money with Caesar's face on it. Even Caesar himself.

Or in other words, God's hand print is on everything in our world. God is our creator. So, the second point annuls the first point, because nothing belongs to Caesar. A very important detail the Herodians would have missed out on, being a secular group in support of Rome. With no knowledge of what the Jewish community believed.

Now we may not have mastered this ability to deal with the dilemmas of our lives as smoothly as Jesus does in our gospel this morning. But we do have the capacity to reflect on God's Word in prayer before making a decision. To put God at the center of our minds. Or in other words, we have the ability to ask the Sunday School age old question: What would Jesus do? Before making a decision.

What I hear Jesus saying to us in our gospel this morning, is that Jesus is encouraging us to always put God first when making decisions in our lives. To pray to God (**Image**), and reflect on what God would do in this situation. If we do this, then often times, our decisions are more likely to have a positive impact on our lives. Helping us become the people God created us to be.

Unfortunately, we do not always do a good job of putting God first when making decisions. Sometimes, we get stubborn, and think we don't need help when making a tough decision. Sometimes, our self interest motivates us in making decisions. Sometimes, fear and anxiety shape our decisions. Sometimes in the midst of all the chaos we deal with on a day to day basis, we get distracted and make rush decisions without any time for reflection.

What we find when our stubbornness or our self interest or our anxiety or our chaotic distraction drive our decision making, is that our decisions are more likely to have a negative impact on our lives. Making it more difficult for us to be the people God created us to be.

So, making decisions with God front and center, is what Jesus invites us to do. Give to God what is God's. Or in other words, give everything of ourselves to God's vision for our world.

This doesn't mean we will always make decisions that leave people 100% satisfied. Sometimes we have to make tough decisions that not everyone agrees on. But, if we make these decisions from a place where God's love and purpose for our world is front and center, then people will be impacted by our decisions in positive ways. They experience God's love and grace.

Like Jesus, we all face decisions that can dictate our futures. That can shape who we will become, and where we will be going. For Jesus, his decision buys him more time to do his ministry, while still giving the people who follow him hope that he has come to implement change. To give them a better future than what the Empire is offering.

For us, the impact depends on the decision we are making. Whether it is choosing to ask someone to marry you that you have fallen in love with or choosing to walk away because of a fear of rejection. Whether it is choosing a career based on what gifts you have to offer or choosing a career that will make you a lot of money. Whether it is

choosing to give a portion of your money to support your local food bank or use that money to stock up your snack shelves with potato chips **(Image)**. Whether it is choosing to create a society that is welcoming and loving to as many people as possible or choosing to create a society driven by our anxieties. Creating barriers between one another. Whether it is taking a chance, uprooting your life, and moving to Calgary, because you feel you have gifts to offer. Even if you're born and raised in Edmonton. Or choosing to stay in the comforts of small-town Radisson. Even if you feel you have lived out your welcome. Whether it is pepperoni, or ham and pineapple, or something like anchovies and spinach that you choose as toppings for your pizza **(Image)**.

We make a lot of decisions in our lives. Some that have a big impact on our wellbeing. Others that just leave a savoury or bad taste in our mouth. Whatever the impact, Jesus is standing before us today reassuring us that God wants to be front and center in our lives. Helping guide us in our decision making, through God's word, and through God's voice **(Image)**. Moving us to make healthy decisions for the wellbeing of our neighbours and ourselves.

Jesus is standing before us today reassuring us that God's hand print, the Holy Spirit, is on everything we have, and on everything we do. Helping us grow into the people God created us to be. Helping us make decisions that have a positive impact on our world. Helping us give to God what is God's.

Let us pray, God of wisdom, be present with us when we are making decisions in our lives and in our community. Give us the wisdom, love, and grace that we need to make decisions that impact our world in positive ways. Giving to you what is yours. **Amen.**

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